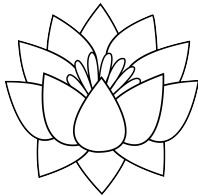


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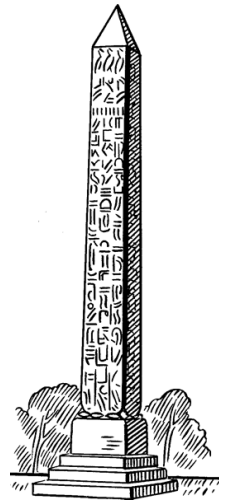
ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CREATION MYTH

Waters Waiting

Before the beginning of time there was Nu, a **stagnant**, unmoving waste of water. Nu exists only today in the deepest well water and in the floodwaters of the Nile. Nu is also called infinity, nothingness, darkness, and chaos. Before the beginning, Nu was everywhere.



Before the beginning the waters waited, still. Then – there was no “when,” because time had not yet come into being – from the waters Nu, a ripple spread and a **lotus**, or water lily flower, floated up to the surface and bloomed, opening its petals into Nu. There was chaos. From the center of the bloom, Ra flew out in the shape of a bennu bird¹ and landed on the top of a benben stone or **obelisk** in the middle of a hill. When he did this, there was light because he carried the sun.



Ra and his children

The sun god, Ra, the creator, was along in the world. He was neither male nor female and had one all seeing, blazing eye which could roam the universe and observe everything. Lonely, he joined with his shadow and spat out his children; Shu, his son and god of the air, and Tefnut, his daughter and goddess of rain, moisture, and mist.



Shu and Tefnut were given the task of putting chaos into order by separating the light and the darkness. However, while they were doing this they became separated from Ra and lost in the watery chaos of Nu. Ra was terribly upset that his beloved children were missing and sent his all-seeing eye into the bubbling, churning, watery chaos of Nu to find them. After many years, the all-seeing eye found the children and returned them to their father. When he was reunited with his children, Ra wept tears of happiness. Wherever they fell on the hill, humankind sprang up. In their joy, Ra, Shu, and Tefnut made another all-seeing eye and this eye became the moon.

¹ a mythical bird, like a heron, associated with the sun and rebirth

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Creation of the Earth

Ra was ready to create a world for his people to live in. Shu and Tefnut gave birth to twins. Geb was the earth and Nut was the sky. As Geb lay down to make the earth, he rested on one elbow and bent his knee up to make the hills and valleys of the earth. But Nut was twisted with Geb. In order to pull the twins apart, Shu, god of the air, lifted Nut high above Geb so that she formed the sky with her toes and fingertips touching the horizons. This is why the people of ancient Egypt often paint Geb and Nut with Shu between them. Nut's skin is usually blue sprinkled with stars and Geb's skin is mud brown with green hair representing the grass, plants, and earth. Geb and Nut had four children who represent the four forces of life: Osiris, the god of fertility; Isis, the mother goddess; Set, god of evil; and Nephthys, goddess of death.

